An Abstract from the life of the
Revd. David Brainerd Missionary
to the Indians. {Born April 20th 1718
Haddam Connecticut

Mr. Brainerd's convictions of sin, previously to his conversion, seem to have been of a very deep, & pungent nature. Few, perhaps have ever had more humbling views of the depravity of the heart; & the insufficiency of their own works to recommend them to the favour of God than he had. And after it pleased the Lord to reveal Himself reconciled through Jesus Christ; Joy & Mr. Brainerd's joy & peace in believing were as remarkable as his distress, & anxiety had before been. He seems, very soon after his conversion, to have felt a great desire to be employed in spreading the gospel of our Lord & Saviour among the heathen. So great was his Zeal, & love for the service of God, and such was his joy in the hope of eternal glory, that he seemed in a great measure dead to all earthly things. His desire for the salvation of souls was such, that he seemed willing to forsake all, that he might carry the blessed gospel to the destitute. Thus God, by an unusual experience in divine things, appeared unto him, & deadened his heart to the pleasures, seemed preparing him for the great work to which he appointed him.

Mr. Brainerd was licensed to preach the gospel in July 1742 and the following November he was appointed, (by the Honorable Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge,) a Missionary to the Indians, in America, being then about twenty four years old.

(April 1743) Mr Brainerd began his labours, among the Indians, at Kaunaumeek, (May 1743) between Albany & Stockbridge (New York state) where there was a small settlement of Indians. He continued among them about a year. And though his labours were constant & faithful, it did not seem good to the Great Head of the church, to give him much success in winning souls to Jesus. His situation here was at times very distressing; being destitute of almost all the conveniences & many of the necessaries of life; & in a feeble state of health. But the joy of the Lord was his strength, and he often found in the howling wilderness, that joy & peace in Christ the world cannot give, or take away.

His next pastoral labours were at a settlement at the Forks of the Delaware Pen. He continued to labour in, & about this place from the time of his ordination (June 1744) till the June following. During this time he visited the Indians on the Susquehannah, & dispensed the word of life to them.

Diligent, & faithful to perform the duties of his arduous task, he abounded in labours, in fasting often, in prayer fervent for the conversion of his people. And he had the satisfaction to see that his labour was not in vain in the Lord. Though the opposition of many of his hearers, was great, and their attachment to their own superstition as great, yet at times they were very attentive, & seem much affected, & some of their hearers, both Indians & Whites were hopefully converted. It is pleasing to contemplate this man of God here in the wilderness feasting on angels food, though his body is sustained by the coarsest fare. Though shut out from the society of all those with whom he had taken sweet counsel, yet he holds sweet converse with the King of Kings, & finds the most delightful company in an Indian hut. This sweet, & heavenly frame of mind was not uninterrupted by darkness & dejection, yet generally he could say it is good for me to draw near to God. The kind providence of God is also to be noticed, in preserving this his servant in journeyings often, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness & painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger & thirst in fastings often, in cold & heat & and all this too in a feeble state of body, often scarcely able to stand.

His success at this place was not very considerable, & at length he left them almost discouraged, that the Lord had not sent him to reap his labours to Crosweekcreek. Here June 19. 1745 — It pleased the Lord that Mr. Brainerd should meet with great success. Here we see fulfilled the promise of God by the mouth of his servant, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Here see the man who went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, coming again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. (Psal. 126. 5.6.) When Mr. B. arrived at Crosweekcreek he found very few of the Indians living together, & those who were then there were principally women. His first discourse to these seemed attended with divine power, at least so much that they made no opposition, as had frequently been the case in other places. And when he stood to preach for them again the next day, some of the women travelled 15 miles to invite some of their friends to attend with them. The assembly was thus considerably enlarged, & they all attended in an orderly & becoming manner. Those first discourses had a very pleasing effect. And Mr. B. continued preaching & visiting from house to house daily; & their number increased almost daily. Mr. B. observes that his private conversation seemed more effectual, than his public discourses, in convincing of sin.

It very soon became evident, that the Lord
was among them of a truth; & those who
had lately been regardless & ignorant of eternal
things, now began to inquire in good earnest
what shall we do to be saved. The Indian
reveling & drunkenness was converted into
sober, & devout worship of the only true God.
The assembly, which soon became considerably
large, was very solemn, & many, from the
man of grey hairs to the little child,
were much affected & deeply convicted. In
Mr. B's journal of Aug.t 8. he thus writes, "I stood
"amazed at the influence that seized the au-
-dience almost universally, & could compare
"it to nothing more aptly, than the irresistable
"force of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge
"that with its insupportable weight & impetu-
"ous sway bears down before it whatever
"is in its way! Almost all persons of all ages
"were bowed down with concern together, & became
"one as not able to withstand the shock of this sur-
"prising operation! Old men & women, who
"had been drunken votaries for many years,
"& some little children, not more than 6 or 7.
"years of age, appeared in distress for their
"souls, as well as persons of middle age. And it
"was apparent these children (some of them at least)
"were not merely frighted with seeing the general

"concern, that were made sensible of their
"danger, the sad state of their hearts, & their
"misery without Christ, as some of them expressed
"it. The most stubborn hearts were now obliged
"to bow. They were almost universally crying
"& crying for mercy in every part of the house,
"& many out of doors, & numbers could neither
"stand nor go: Their concern was so great, &
each for himself, that none seemed to take
"any notice of those about them, but each
"prayed as freely for themselves, & (I am apt to
"think) were, to their own apprehension, as much
"retired as if they had been every one by himself in
"the thickest desert. It seemed to me there was
"now an apt fulfilment of that Scripture, Zech.
"XII. 10. 11. 12 for there was now a great mourning,
"like the mourning of Hadadrimmon. And each
"seemed to mourn apart." I have given this
at length as a specimen of many of the meet-
ings among them; & as better calculated
to give society a just idea of this glorious
work among the Indians, than though I
had epitomized the accounts of many
meetings. A goodly number about this time
attained comfort in the hope of the gospel &
gave good evidence of that repentance that
is unto life.

Mr. Brainerd's journal (about & after this time) is full of convincing descriptions of the power of God in almost every meeting. So great was the force of truth, that many often followed Mr. B. from the place of worship to his own house, that they might learn what they should do to be saved. On one of these occasions, when conversing with a number at his house, Mr. B. thus writes. "It was an amazing season of power "among them, & seemed as if God had bowed the "heavens & come down. There seemed here, as I "thought, a lively emblem of the solemn day of "accounts! A mixture of heaven & hell, of joy unspeakable & anguish inexpressible"!

As an example of their attachment to Mr. B. & concern for the prosperity of Zion, I mention a circumstance recorded in Mr. B. journal of Aug. 26. When he was about to leave them for a time to visit the Indians on the Susquehannah. Mr. B. represented to them the necessity of divine influences with him in his journey, in order to success, & proposed to his people to spend the remainder of the day (from am 1/2 hours big) in particular prayer for that purpose. On this subject he thus writes, "They cheerfully complied with "the motion, & soon after I left them, the sun being "then about an hour & half high at night, they "began, & continued praying all night, until break

"I dare or very near, never misthinking, they tell
"me, until they went out & viewed the stars
"& saw the morning star a considerable light, that
"it was later than common bedtime. Thus eager
"& unwearied are they in their devotions!"

Mr. B. began now to feel much satisfaction in
christian conversation with his people, & frequently
expressed surprize at the knowledge she had
attained. "I know of no assembly," says he, "where
"there seems to be so much of the presence of God
"where brotherly love so much prevails, & where I
"should take so much delight in the worship of God,
"in the general, as in my own congregation. Although
"not more than nine months ago, they were worship-
"ing devils & dumb idols, under the power of pagan
"darkness & superstition". After a communion
season, in April 1746. Mr. B. says, "I never did
"see such an appearance of christian love among any people
"in all my life. It was so remarkable, that one might
"well have cried with an agreeable surprize,
"Behold how they love one another! I think there
"could be no greater evidence of mutual affection
"among the people of God in the early days of christi-
"anity, than that now appeared here. The sight
"was so desirable, & so well becoming the gospel,
"that nothing less could be said of it, than that it was
"the doing of the Lord, the genuine operations of
"him, who is love."

Soon these Indians began to settle together and, Dec. 31st Mr. Brainerd remarks, that "the "Indians are now gathered together from all quar- "=ters to this place, & have built them cottages, "so that more than twenty families live "within a quarter of a mile of me!" The great- =est number I find mentioned together, at any time here, was 130.

Mr. Brainerd's common method of preaching was to dwell principally upon the practical & spiritual parts of the gospel. That part of di- =vine truth more particularly called doctrinal, he taught in a catechetical manner, by ask- =ing questions for them to answer, & then giv- =ing his own explanation. He rightly judged that persons in their situation could, much better, be made to understand the doctrines if given in familiar conversation, than in a regular discourse, especially as he had to speak to them by an interpreter. (It does not appear that Mr. B. ever made himself master of the Indian tongue.)

It is worthy of remark that the effect of divine truth, set home by the Holy Spirit, was, in many instances so great that these were induced to forsake those practices, & break off from those connections which were contrary to the gospel, without hearing them stigmatized as such.

To illustrate this idea by a single example.
A man who had left his wife & taken another woman, (a thing common among them) was led by the influence of grace to break off from his connection with the latter, & to cleave to his former wife, from a sense of duty, without ever hearing from Mr. B. that such a practice was sinful to God. Several such instances might be mentioned.

I cannot find that Mr. B. planted any other church among the Indians than the one at Crossweksung. He resided here almost the whole time from June 1745. to March 1747. April 17th 1746 Mr. Brainerd administered the Lords supper to the Indians. The number of communicants was 23 five or six who were thought fit subjects of this ordinance being absent. This appears to be the only time this ordinance was administered by Mr. B. to the Indians alone, though at another time a goodly number of them communed with a congregation of white people under the care of the Presbytery not far distant. The whole number baptized by Mr. B. was 77. 38 adults & 39 children; all within the space of eleven months. "And it must be noted," says he, "that I have baptized no adults, but such as appear to have a valid "& special grace wrought upon their hearts: I mean "such who have had the experience not only of the "awakening & humbling, but in the judgment of charity "of the renewing & comforting influences of the divine Spirit

Of those who professed their attachment to Christ, Mr. B. remarks, that toward the close of his life, that they had with a very few exceptions, continued steadfast in the faith, & obedience of the gospel. After the Indians began to reside in any considerable number together, Mr. B. obtained an instructor to reside with him among them, & to instruct their children, & many of those grown to years of manhood attended his instruction, when their time would admit. Particularly in an evening school. The progress of those who attended these instructions was very satisfactory. Mr. B. then began to teach them the practice of agriculture. In this they engaged with spirit, though ignorant, and disturbed by the States who pretended, though unjustly, to claim their lands. Mr. Brainerd's health was now so impaired by long & painful exertion, that he could not attend the duties of his station. He therefore resolved to take a tour to N. England, to try to regain his health. The last interview he had with his people was March 18. 1747, when he then went to N. England, & indeed, with remarkable christian fortitude & resignation, a very painful decline till October 9th when he departed at Mr. Edwards's (Northampton) His death was truly that of the upright, peace.

The Revd. John Brainerd succeeded his brother in the pastoral care of these Indians.

Mr. Brainerd, seems first of all, to have preached the gospel to the Indians; & afterward to have taught them the arts of civilized life. And on one occasion he observes, of some Indians who had been among christians, or professed christians, that they must be more difficult to convince, & awaken than those he found entirely wild.

In stating the difficulties which opposed him in spreading the gospel among the Indians, Mr. B. mentions the following. A rooted aversion to christianity. This arises partly from the immoral, & vicious conduct of many nominal christians who have been among them. They charge such conduct upon all the whites indiscriminately, & it is not an easy matter to make them distinguish between nominal & real christians. Another thing which makes them averse to christianity, is a fear of being enslaved. They are a very jealous people, & possessing little or no feelings of benevolence they conclude the professions of missionaries to be but a mean to entangle them. They cannot believe that missionaries would undergo such hardships merely for the good of others, & therefore must wish to take the advantage of them.

"Another spring of aversion to the Christian
"religion in the Indians, is, their strong attach-
=ment to their own religious notions (if they
"may be called religious) & the early prejudices
"they have imbibed in favour of their own
"frantic & ridiculous kind of worship." As to their
notions of God & religious worship, Mr. B. observes
that it is hardly possible to ascertain what they
were before he came among them. "But after
"the strictest inquiry respecting their notions
"of the Deity, I find, that in ancient times, before
"before the coming of the White people, some sup-
=posed there were four invisible powers who pre-
=sided over the four corners of the earth. Others im-
=agine the sun to be the only deity, & that all
"things were made by him. & But after the com-
=ing of the White people, they seemed to suppose
there were three deities, & three only, because
they saw people of three different kinds & com-
=plexion, viz. English, Negroes & themselves.

"They seem to have some confused notion about
"a future state of existance, & many of
"them imagine that the Chickuny (i.e. the
"shadow) or that survives the body, will at
"death go southward, & in an unknown
"but curious place, will enjoy some kind of happi-
=ness such as hunting, feasting, dancing, & the like.
The notion of going south to happier scenes seems to
have originated from their part of the continent being
bounded Northward from a cold climate, the more comfortable
situation.

They have some faint notions of rewards & punishments in a future state, and these depend entirely upon their conduct with respect to the second table of the law.

In their religious worship, there is no appearance of devotion, though they often sacrifice, & think their calamities in this world are to be imputed to the neglect of these sacrifices.

"What further contributes to their aversion to christianity, is, the influence of their powwaws, (i.e. conjurers & diviners) upon them." These are a kind of fortunetellers, and pretend to heal the sick, & have intercourse with invisible beings, or spirits.

We make this single remark on the life of Mr. Brainerd, viz. The faithful missionary in the cause of God, need not be discouraged whatever be his difficulties; & however little success he may seem to have. The word of the Lord will not return void, but will accomplish that thereunto it is sent. And he shall not lose his reward. God, we see, can make the

dreary wilderness so to abound with rivers of consolation for his servants. And the joy of the Lord is their strength.

Taken from Mr. Edwards life of the

Rev. David Brainerd.

Princeton May 2. 1814

Backus Wilbur.